

FORM B – BUILDING

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

14-41

Marion

N

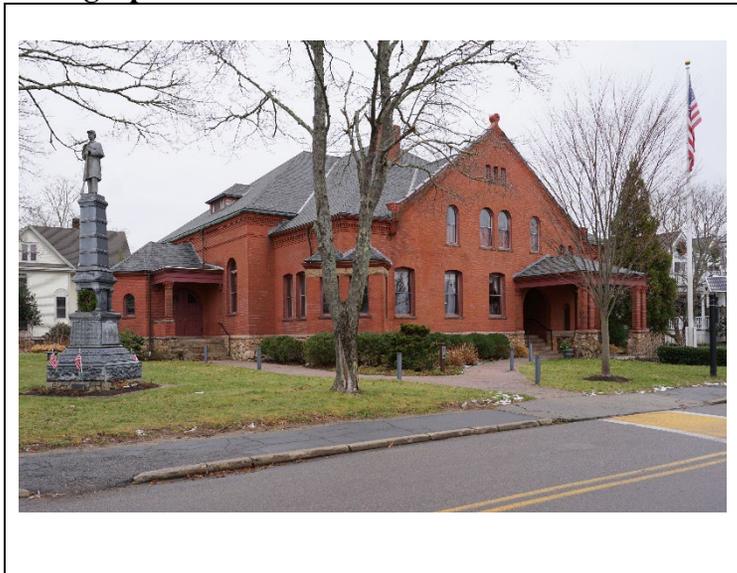
MRN.23

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Town/City: MARION

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): Marion Village

Photograph



Address: 164 Front Street

Historic Name: Marion Music Hall

Uses: Present: Institutional – Marion Community Center

Original: Entertainment – Music Hall

Date of Construction: 1891

Source: Joseph Smart, *The School by the Sea*

Style/Form: Queen Anne

Architect/Builder: William Gibbons Preston

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Fieldstone, granite

Wall/Trim: Brick, brownstone, granite, terra cotta/
Wood

Roof: Asphalt shingles

Locus Map



Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

Soldiers Monument (1894, MRN.908, Cover Photo)

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

None

*Based on Property Card and/or observation

Condition: Good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: acres

Setting: Prominently sited on a corner lot marking eastern entrance on Front Street into the commercial heart of village, with late-19th and early-20th century houses on small parcels on Cottage Street. Large town park across the street with open views to Sippican Harbor. The parcel is landscaped with lawn, mature trees, and foundation plantings. Brick walkways lead to the entrances on both Front and Cottage Streets.

Recorded by: Eric Dray, Preservation Consultant

Organization: Sippican Historical Society

Date (*month / year*): March 2023

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

MARION

164 FRONT STREET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

(Reprinted from 1998 MRN.23, edited and expanded)

Designed by Boston architect and Marion summer resident William Gibbons Preston, Marion's Music Hall is a fine example of a Queen Anne public building. Constructed in 1891 of red brick and characterized by asymmetrical massing, this building rises 1½-stories to an intersecting hip and gable roof. The building rests on a significantly raised fieldstone foundation capped with granite. The main façade, facing Front Street, is dominated by a broad gable with parapet, and an off-center porte cochere. Sheltering the main entrance, the porte cochere hip roof is supported by paired brick posts that rise from rubblestone bases. The posts are echoed with pilasters (flat columns) on the main facade. The paired arched front doors are accessed by a short flight of stairs recessed within a broad arch. To the right of the door is a niche with a bronze marker topped by ornamental terra cotta. Near the apex of the terra cotta-tile edged gable is a trio of narrow windows, above which the brick is set in a ziggurat pattern. A square bay enclosed by twin pyramidal roof caps is set into the southeast corner of the building. This bay includes a broad course of rough-cut granite above the windows.

Projecting from the western third of the south elevation facing Cottage Street is a one-story polygonal vestibule containing a secondary entrance with doors similar to the front entrance. Access to this entrance is gained via a short flight of steps to an open porch on the vestibule's east wall. Enclosed by a pyramidal roof, the walls of the vestibule are pierced by arched windows. In general, trim consists of rock-faced brownstone sills and lintels as well as terra cotta elements, including Corinthian capitals atop the square columns of the main facade's porte cochere and side elevation's secondary entrance porch. The horizontal elements of the roof cornice are detailed with butt-end bricks dentils (teeth-like molding), with terra cotta molding.

Except for the rear (west) elevations, fenestration includes segmentally-arched windows on the first-story, and round-headed windows on the second story. Bricks are laid vertically above the first-story windows creating flared lintels, and multiple courses of vertically-laid bricks form the rounded lintels for the second story windows. The windows are all wood, 2/2 double-hung sash. The rear elevation has a larger system of round-headed windows that have fanlight windows infilling the upper, rounded portion of the windows (Photo 3).

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

(Reprinted, and edited, from 1998 MRN.23)

Between 1872 and 1888, Elizabeth Pitcher Taber (1791-1888) expended approximately \$137,000 of her substantial inheritance on public buildings in her native town of Marion. Her legendary philanthropy gave the town an economic boost at a time in the 1870s and 1880s when the glory days of maritime activities were over or on the wane and the benefits reaped by the town from an affluent summer colony were still in the future. The roster of Mrs. Taber's good works included the funding of a town library (1872), a Congregational community center and chapel (1880s), and above all, Tabor Academy (1872). Designed in 1891 by the important and prolific architect William Gibbons Preston, the Music Hall represents one of Mrs. Taber's last gifts to the town.

The beginnings of the Music Hall can be traced to Mrs. Taber's disapproval of the presentation of "worldly theatricals" in the Congregational Chapel at 39 Main Street (MRN.40).¹ A provision of her will allotted money for the construction of a "suitable building for a lecture and music hall, for use of the inhabitants of said village." Costing a total of \$23,000, an additional bequest of \$1,000 proved vastly insufficient for the future upkeep of this community center.

¹ 1998 Form B has the address for chapel as 37 Main Street, which is incorrect.

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Boston-based architect William Gibbons Preston is credited with the design of the Music Hall. The son of Boston master builder Jonathan Preston, William G. Preston was active as an architect between 1860 and 1902. Around 1860, Preston studied informally in Paris ateliers, returning to Boston eager to work on projects that celebrated the design of 18th century France. Important early examples of his work include Boston's Museum of Natural History (1863) on Berkley Street in the Back Bay, M.I.T.'s Rogers Building (built ca. 1864, demolished 1938), and Hotel Vendome (early 1870s). Farther afield, he designed a number of great commercial blocks and Queen Anne-style residences in Savannah, GA. In Marion, his 20-plus projects included alterations for the Sippican Hotel (1884-1885, demolished 1929), and the Water Street "cottages" of Edward and George Hamlin (1 Water Street, MRN.162 and 23 Water Street, MRN.167), Richard N. Dow (5 Water Street, MRN.165), J. W. Austin (75 Water Street, MRN.171), and Rev. John Brooks (1 Allen Street, MRN.304).

Mrs. Taber evidently discovered Preston's talents during the early 1880s; hiring him to design the mid-1880s Tabor Academy Chapel, Girls Dormitory, lecture hall and music room (all demolished). In 1884, Preston abandoned his family's tradition of summering in Beverly Farms, MA, in favor of Marion, moving into a cottage of his own design in 1884 (location undetermined).

Originally, the Music Hall's building and activities were entrusted to the Marion Library Society, and was then taken over by the Town of Marion at an unspecified date. In 1894, the Music Hall's lot was deemed worthy of the site of a handsome cast-iron Soldier's Monument (MRN.908) which was dedicated during the summer of 1894. Evidently, the Music Hall's period as a cultural center was brief. Over time, the building has been rented to the South Eastern Light Company and various local organizations, including the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

The Town of Marion still owns the Music Hall, and it is available to rent for functions. The operations are overseen by a Music Hall Advisory Committee.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

- Gordon, Edward. MHC Form B, MRN.23, 1998.
- Smart, Joseph J. *The School by the Sea*. Marion: Tabor Academy, 1964.

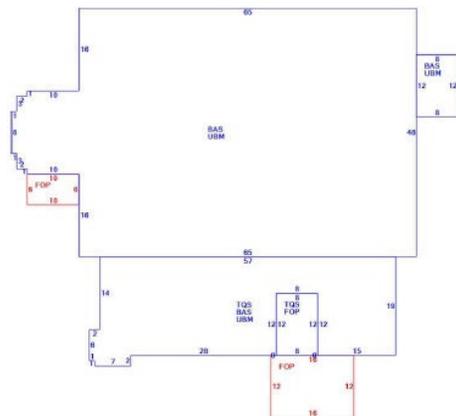


Figure 1. Marion Assessor Sketch.



Photo 2. View from Front Street, looking southwest.

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Photo 3. View from Cottage Street, looking northeast.

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National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

- Individually eligible Eligible **only** in a historic district
- Contributing to a potential historic district Potential historic district

Criteria: A B C D

Criteria Considerations: A B C D E F G

Statement of Significance by Eric Dray, Preservation Consultant for Sippican Historical Society

The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.

This property is a contributing resource in the combined Areas of Wharf Village-Sippican Village (MRN.N) and Water Street (MRN.L), hereinafter referred to as Marion Village.*

Marion Village is recommended as eligible for listing at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Maritime History. Marion Village contains the great majority of buildings connected to Marion's historical maritime development beginning in the late-18th century. With the rise of saltmaking, shipyards, and whaling, maritime activity increased dramatically into the mid-19th century, as did residential development in Marion Village. In addition to the houses built by those in the maritime industry, Marion Village contains numerous buildings and structures associated with maritime industrial activity, including a chandlery, sail loft, cooperage, and wharves. As Marion Village's prosperity became linked to Sippican Harbor, Marion Village also became the commercial, political and institutional center of the town.

Marion Village is also recommended as eligible for listing at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Entertainment/Recreation. Starting in the mid-19th century, maritime activity declined significantly. The decline in maritime activity was eventually replaced by the rise in the 1870s of a summer colony as Marion Village emerged as an elite summer resort. This was facilitated by the arrival of train service in the 1854. Summer visitors, including artists and writers, were drawn Sippican Harbor's beauty and tranquility. A large hotel, the Sippican Hotel, was located at the corner of South and Water Streets, and a few houses were converted to inns. While the hotel was town down in 1929, a large livery complex built by the Hiller Brothers at 147 Front Street (MRN.216) is extant. They provided horse-drawn vehicles to summer visitors registered at the Sippican Hotel, and ferried guests back and forth between the hotel and the train depot. In Marion Village, ownership (or occupancy through rental) of many houses began to shift from local maritime families to seasonal residents, including nationally-noteworthy politicians, businessmen, artists and writers. During this period, Marion Village also saw the addition of high style, architect-designed summer cottages and recreation resources.

Marion Village is recommended as eligible for listing at the local level under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. Marion Village is a remarkably intact historic town center, including a compact collection of historic dwellings, along with a few churches, schools, commercial buildings and recreation buildings. Marion Village contains a great concentration of Federal and Greek Revival houses; and examples of later Victorian-era styles, including high-style examples of summer house architecture along Sippican Harbor and large institutional buildings not found elsewhere in Marion.

This property is also eligible individually under Criterion A and C at the local level. Designed by Boston architect and Marion summer resident William Gibbons Preston, Marion's Music Hall is a fine example of a Queen Anne public building, the only masonry example of the Queen Anne style in Marion, and the only extant example of a musical hall in Marion.

*The potential Marion Village district boundaries include surveyed areas within the boundary of MRN.N completed in 2020-2022 for Barden-Hiller (MRN.Y), Cottage Street (MRN.Z), Main Street (MRN.AA), South Street (MRN.AB), Upper Pleasant Street (MRN.AC), and Upper Main Street (MRN.AH).